asta | american seed trade association

SEED

Advancing U.S. Agriculture through Plant Breeding Innovation

The seed sector is foundational to the agricultural process, delivering solutions to the evolving challenges facing farmers, consumers, and the environment. The continuous advancement in the understanding of plant genomes and breakthroughs in plant breeding tools, such as genome editing, enable new opportunities for the seed sector to develop innovative solutions with more precision and efficiency.

To maintain U.S. agriculture as the global leader in innovation and to enable progress in the seed sector, government policies for plant breeding innovation must be clear, predictable, risk-proportionate, and based on the best available science.

Public and private entities in the seed sector are utilizing plant breeding innovation technologies, such as genome editing, to improve crops including corn, citrus, berries, wheat, and soy. The right policy environment can incentivize investments in plant breeding innovation, drive creation of new jobs and market opportunities, and strengthen the U.S agriculture and food supply chain.

We urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to work in close coordination to implement a coherent, consistent regulatory approach that provides predictability and clarity to innovators in the plant breeding sector. In addition, we call on the U.S. government to lead globally in advancing international policy alignment and regulatory compatibility to remove barriers to plant breeding innovation. ASTA, along with our partner regional and national seed associations and the International Seed Federation, actively engage regulatory authorities worldwide to promote science-based, transparent policies that support seed innovation and trade.

Genome editing represents the latest breakthrough in a long continuum of breeding methods that public and private sector scientists are using to improve seeds and plants for U.S farmers. Often working within the plant's own genome, plant scientists are able to achieve similar outcomes as with older breeding methods, but with more precision and efficiency.

Federal Agency Action

Sustained Investment in the National Plant Germplasm System: The National Plant Germplasm System, managed by USDA's Agricultural Research Service, plays a critical role in conserving and distributing plant genetic resources that are essential to U.S. farmers, plant breeders, researchers, and companies. The U.S. seed sector depends on this world-leading resource of plant genetic diversity as the foundation to develop resilient, high-performing varieties that meet evolving challenges from climate change, pests, and market demands. What we save today determines what we can grow tomorrow.

ASTA Position: ASTA strongly supports continued investment into the preservation, enhancement, and modernization of the National Plant Germplasm System.

The U.S. Coordinated Framework for the Regulation of Biotechnology: For over three decades, the seed sector has safely commercialized biotech crops under the oversight of USDA, FDA and EPA. To accelerate innovation and maintain U.S. leadership in plant breeding innovation, we must first modernize regulatory policies at USDA, FDA, and EPA to reflect the latest science and the years of regulatory experience. The U.S. regulatory implementation must be able to respond quickly to the speed of innovation and agilely to keep pace with the global landscape.

ASTA Position: ASTA calls on the Federal agencies to act in reducing duplicative reviews, eliminating unnecessary regulatory oversight, and aligning agency responsibilities. An effective and efficient regulatory system will provide the clarity needed for public and private researchers to confidently invest in solutions that advance U.S. seed and agriculture sectors.

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